

Andrew Jackson to John Cocke, December 28, 1813, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JOHN COCKE.

Fort Strother, December 28, 1813.

Sir: you will receive herewith inclosed, a complaint lodged by the path killer, against part of your Division on their return march from this place. If the statement, should be correct, it is a reflection on the state, as well as on the regt. Brigade or Division to whom they belong, and ought to meet with speedy and ample punishment. If any thing could have been proved against old Rattcliff,¹ of any Treason, or hostility

¹ Ratcliff was a wealthy Cherokee. After the war he presented to the federal government a large claim for cattle taken by the soldiers. Meigs, the Cherokee agent, examined it dubiously but concluded it was valid and paid it. *Am. St. Papers, Indian Affairs*, II. 114.

against the united States, then and in that case he was amenable to the laws of the united States, and ought to have been arrested and tried by such tribunal as had competent Jurisdiction of the offence. But that a sett of men should without any authority rob a man who is claimed as a member of the Cherokee nation, who is now friendly and engaged with us in a war against the hostile creeks, is such an outrage, to the rules of war, the laws of nations and of civil society, and well calculated to sow the minds of the whole nation against the united States, and is such as ought to meet with the frowns of every good citizen, and the agents be promptly prosecuted and punished as robbers. I have to request on the receipt of this you will cause old Ratcliff to be liberated, his property returned, and the offenders, arrested and punished. I have wrote to governor Blount upon this subject and Colo. Jonathan J. Meigs, whose duty it is as well as ours, to have Justice done in all

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such cases, and the offenders punished. for the credit of the Troops, from your Division it is that the guilty should be apprehended and punished, that the reputation of the honest part of your Division, may not be Tarnished by the acts of the dishonest. Is it not cruel that the *whooping boy* , who fought bravely at Talishatchey and got wounded at the Battle of Tulladega, should be plundered, by the east Tennessee troops, whilst confined with his wounds. what will the general goverment think of the state, if such things is permitted to go unpunished. It is as much Theft as tho the property, was stolen from one of our own citizens, and the laws of the united states provide amply for the punishment. Strict inquiry ought to be made whether any commissioned officers were present, or had any knowledge of this atrocious act, and if so they ought to be immediately arrested, and tried by a court martial, and afterwards transferred to the civil authority. I have Just learnt by Doctor Vandyke that it was Colo. Wears Regt. that has committed the above felonies, and I have the fullest confidence in your exertion to have this business well prosecuted and by that means have the stain that it has inflicted in the reputation of our state therby washed out, and blotted forever. for I hope and trust it is the last of the kind that will ever be recorded, and I have to repeat again, that it is Just, that all officers should be arrested and tried by a court martial. it is stated that Colo Wear was privy to it, if so, have him arrested, if he is innocent, it is due to him that an investigation should be had, that his charecter may not lie under the stigma that it now labours under. May it be done away.²

² Jackson's wrath soon cooled and when, in 1816, the Cherokees laid claims before the federal government for damages inflicted, on this and other occasions, Jackson denounced them. See Jackson to Crawford, May 8, and June 16, 1816, in the next volume.

Before I close this letter I must name again to you, that we have not one pound of bread stuff and information from Fort armstrong states there is none at that place. It appears that there is some enchantment, wrought, by the Indian prophets on our contractors, that will lead to our starvation but to counteract this *phisic* , as I advised you in mine of yesterday, I have at the request of the commander in chief of this army Genl Pinckney appointed Major

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James Baxter asst. D. quarter master and sent him to overlook the contractors, with full powers to buy in case he has not an ample supplies agreeable to your and Genl Pinckney requisitions. I now know in a few days we will have ample supplies. I wish you on the recpt of this forthwith to inform me by express, in what forwardness the fifteen hundred troops, under the requisition of the President is in and at what time they will be in the field. existing circumstances requires promptness in execution. The Indians are in our front and a British force Just arived at Pensacola. I have the honor to be verry respectfully yr mo. ob. servt.